DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 410 HE 020 953

TITLE The Letter: 37 Presidents Write.
INSTITUTION American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 6p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Association of Higher Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Viewpoints (120)
JOURNAL CIT AAHE Bulletin; p10-14 Nov 1987

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; *College Presidents; *College School Cooperation; *Educational Quality; Higher Education; *Minority Groups; Position Papers; Schools of Education; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Recruitment; Teaching (Occupation)

ABSTRACT

Perspectives on how to improve U.S. education are provided in an open letter signed by 37 college presidents and chancellors who attended a September 1987 Spring Hill conference. The conference focused largely on the issue outlined in "A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century," a report sponsored by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. Priorities that are identified include: emphasizing to the public the importance of quality schools, promoting university and school collaboration, taking initiatives to enhance the attractiveness of teaching as a career and to improve teacher preparation, and making a new commitment to recruit more minorities into teaching. Specific suggestions include: evaluating the resources for departments and schools of education, ensuring that future teachers have a stronger base of knowledge in the academic subjects they will teach and of pedagogy that is specific to these subjects, working with two-year institutions to recruit minority students into four-year institutions and into teaching programs, and reaching out to minority youth in their early high school years to promote their college attendance and exposure to the attractions of teaching. The 37 signers and their institutions are listed. (SW)

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THE LETTER

37 Presidents Write . . .

Dear Colleague:

We, the undersigned presidents and chancellors, represent thirty-seven colleges and universities from all sectors of higher education. Early in September we gathered at the Spring Hill Conference Center near Minneapolis to discuss how we might help in the improvement of our nation's schools . . . . and in the elevation of teaching, upon which the quality of our schools so surely rests. We left convinced that there is much we can do. We have all made personal commitments to do more within our own institutions.

We write now to share our thinking with you and to enlist your cooperation in this undertaking. Many of you, like us, are already involved in various efforts related to the improvement of our schools. Now we must all think more deeply about the manifold connections between our institutions and the schools, and act together as persistent and passionate advocates for reform.

The Challenge

We say this because our future as a nation depends more critically than ever before upon the quality of what and how we teach our children. We perceive a national emergency—an emergency rooted not in the failure of our schools, but in the revolution of expectations about what our schools must accomplish. Ultimately, all of the major dimensions of our national life—security, economic growth, human welfare, social stability, cultural achievement—are linked to the improvement of our educational enterprise.

It simply will not do for our schools to produce a small elite to power our scientific establishment, and a larger cadre of workers with the basic skills to do routine work. Millions of people around the world now have these same basic skills and are willing to work twice as long for as little as one-tenth our basic wages. To maintain and enhance our quality of life, we must develop a leading-edge economy based on workers who can think for a living.

Measured against these new expectations, the task before us is enormous. Yet we also perceive an historic opportunity for bringing about fundamental change.

We organized our discussion, in large measure, in response to the challenges outlined by *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, a recent report sponsored by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. The compelling argument of this report is that better schools require higher quality teachers; and to attract and hold higher quality teachers, teaching must become a true profession.

A Nation Prepared is already exerting a strong influence over the movement to improve our nation's schools. In response to the report, a National Board of Professional Teaching Standards has been established. States and localities have joined in by raising

Donald Kennedy: "The best way to affect the quality of instruction is to improve teacher training."

salaries for teachers and initiating changes that will allow schools to become places where teachers can function with increased professional autonomy as well as accountability. On our own campuses, a debate has emerged about how prospective teachers should be prepared. We sense in these and other developments an unprecedented opportunity to transform the nature of teaching and the teaching profession.

The question is, how can we help?

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Speaking Out

First, we can make a personal commitment to speak out for education and the importance of teaching at all levels. The problems of elementary and higher education are deeply intertwined. We must therefore become champions for the whole educational enterprise.

To do this *credibly* is no easy task. It will require us to become more informed about the needs of our schools and communities. It will further require us to address our own shortcomings. Only if we are seriously committed to the improvement of teaching in our own houses can we speak convincingly about the importance of high quality teaching in the schools.

Properly prepared, we have much to say to the American public. As presidents and chancellors, we can blend idealism and realism into a thoughtful vision of what can be accomplished in our communities. Specifically:

- We can emphasize the remarkable difference that quality schools can make in a child's life, and inspire public interest with concrete visions of what our schools can be. At the same time, we must heighten public realization that the problems of education cannot be divorced from issues of family life, nutrition, health, poverty, and other conditions. To have quality education, we must make progress on these other problems as well.
- We can raise the aspirations of parents and children by providing convincing evidence to the public that every child can learn far more than we thought before. At the same time, we can help the public understand that resources for new reforms are scarce; and that many reforms have yet to reach large numbers of our most disadvantaged children.

Collaborating with Schools

Second, we can initiate direct and meaningful affiliations with schools and school districts. Beyond speaking out *about* issues facing the schools, we must make a new commitment to working *with* schools on many issues of mutual interest.

We discussed, and agreed upon, several important principles that should underlie these efforts. One is "mutuality of interest," a phrase that came up repeatedly in our discussions. We must seek genuine partnerships, not imposed arrangements or media facades.

On what should these partnerships be based? We agreed that the deepest, most enduring ones will be those that recognize that we are all engaged in a common profession—the profession of teaching. Teaching is the first business of our universities, just as it is the first business of the primary and secondary schools across the country. Recognition of that deep community of profession should therefore underlie all our efforts.

We agreed that the full measure of needed collaboration will be achieved only if we, as presidents and chancellors, become *personally* involved.

Guided by these convictions, we have pledged to undertake a range of specific commitments in our own settings. Among them:

- to initiate and publish inventories of collaborations in which we are already engaged.
- to use our power to convene university and school officials and create agendas for new partnerships of a continuing nature.
- to encourage forms of collaboration that are genuinely mutual—such as appointing "Master Teachers" to adjunct positions on our faculties, rather than merely encouraging our own faculties to reach out to others.
- to report regularly about our progress in these matters.

There is now a rich inventory of spontaneous experimentation to draw from, and we are pleased

The presidents formulated their recommendations in small group sessions. Bob McCabe (far left) leads a working group on attracting minorities into teaching.

that the number of worthwhile models is increasing rapidly. We need more of them. (A new *National Directory of School-College Partnerships*, available from the American Association for Higher Education, describes many of these models in further detail.)

The Education of Teachers

Third, we can make a new commitment to enhance the attractiveness of teaching as a career and to improve teacher preparation—which, after all, is one of our most direct connections to the schools.

Our nation clearly needs many more of our best students to become teachers—some estimates call for over 20 percent of all our undergraduates. To bring this about, all the segments—elementary through higher education—must collaborate to make teaching a viable and rewarding profession, one that is on an intellectual, social, and economic par with the professional career alternatives currently available to our best students.

This will not happen unless the value we ourselves assign to teaching is seen as high—that is, unless our own classrooms in education *and in the arts and sciences* are themselves places where effective teaching is done.

Why the arts and sciences as well?

Because students preparing to be teachers take the majority of their courses from our arts and sciences faculties, outside our schools of education.

Because these arts and sciences faculties strongly influence whether teaching is valued, and model how teaching is done.

Because only if these arts and sciences faculties enable students to develop a rich and fundamental understanding of the subjects they study will these students be able to make these subjects come alive to others.

As presidents and chancellors, we therefore have a dual task. One is to improve our departments and schools of education; the other is to assign clear and positive value to teaching *across* our institutions.

Within the arts and sciences, we have pledged:

- to ensure that students experience good teaching, value careers in teaching, and learn the fundamental concepts and understandings of a field that will enable them to teach the subject to others—an objective, by the way, that would improve the value of arts and sciences for *all* students.

In addressing this goal, we agreed further that certain areas deserved priority attention. These include the crisis in mathematics education at all levels; the need to ensure that all our graduates can command English in writing, speaking, and complex argument; and the need to relate our general education and majors to the careers they make possible.

Concerning our departments and schools of education, we have pledged:

- to evaluate their effectiveness. We should be content with nothing less than first-rate programs.
- to evaluate the resources we invest in them. First-rate programs may well require higher levels of investment.
- to ensure that future teachers have a stronger base of knowledge in the academic subjects they will teach, and of pedagogy that is specific to these subjects. While there are multiple ways to achieve this objective, we should be clear that the *status quo* is unacceptable. We also believe that first-rate graduate programs have an important and growing role to play.
- to help our programs forge new and organic relationships with the schools they serve. Only with such relationships will our education faculties be able to provide assistance to the schools, develop

Barbara S. Uehling (with Ruth G. Shaw, right): "Through creative, long-term partnerships I believe we can jointly affect meaningful improvement in our shared enterprise."

effective models of preservice education, and provide the kind of continuing professional development that teachers need.

- to increase the presence of minorities on the faculties of these schools, and to ensure that the curriculum is effective with minority students.

We agreed that, in the best of worlds, the faculties in our schools of education should be regarded as valuable resources for the improvement of teaching throughout our campuses. Indeed, as we work toward a greater synthesis of our education curricula and our arts and sciences curricula, this will be one measure of how well we are achieving our objective.

We agreed, finally, that we, as heads of our institutions, have indispensable roles to play in making these things happen, and a special role in bringing our counterparts from the schools—superintendents, principals, teachers—together with our own faculty and administrators. The ultimate strengthening of teacher education will depend on close cooperation across all the sectors. Only through new linkages will we improve the relationship between teacher preparation and the real world of the classroom.

Minority Teachers

Fourth, we can—must—undertake a new commitment to bring more minorities into teaching. Our need for able, well-prepared, compassionate teachers is great; our need for minority teachers with these same qualities is desperate.

Minority school children will soon constitute one-third of all the children in our schools. Meanwhile, if present trends continue, minority teachers will soon constitute less than 5% of our teaching force.

The consequences of these trends will be devastating. Minority children will be deprived of the role models and special kind of caring that only teachers from their own racial and ethnic background can provide. Majority and minority students will be deprived as well, not only of minority perspectives, but of the lessons only their presence can bring.

Accordingly, we have pledged:

- to make our own commitment to minority advancement as visible as possible, and to show evidence of this through minority faculty recruitment, appointments of key minority staff, and through our support for increased financial assistance of minority students.
- to emphasize that improving standards of quality must not result in exclusionary standards at entrance, but in high standards of course attainment and graduation.
- to work with two-year institutions, where the majority of minority college students is now edu-

Signers of Open Letter

Tomas Arciniega, President, California State College-Bakersfield
Richard Berendzen, President, The American University
Elias Blake, (former) President, Clark College
Martha E. Church, President, Hood College
Robert Corrigan, Chancellor, University of Massachusetts at Boston
Robert Dickeson, President, University of Northern Colorado
Paul A. Elsner, Chancellor, Maricopa County Community College District Office
Bro. Raymond L. Fitz, SM, President, University of Dayton
Norman Francis, President, Xavier University of Louisiana
David W. Fraser, President, Swarthmore College
E. K. Fretwell, Jr., Chancellor, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Donald Gerth, President, California State University-Sacramento
Frederick S. Humphries, President, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
Philip H. Jordan, Jr., President, Kenyon College
Kenneth Keller, President, University of Minnesota
Sr. Dorothy Ann Kelly, President, College of New Rochelle
Donald Kennedy, President, Stanford University
Reatha Clark King, President, Metropolitan State University, State University System of Minnesota
C. Peter Magrath, President, University of Missouri
Robert H. McCabe, President, Miami-Dade Community College
Russell Nelson, President, Arizona State University
Dennis O'Brien, President, University of Rochester
Percy Pierre, President, Prairie View A & M University
John Porter, President, Eastern Michigan University
Sr. Joel Read, President, Alverno College
Earle Richardson, President, Morgan State University
Sr. Janice Ryan, President, Trinity College, Vermont
Steven B. Sample, President, State University of New York at Buffalo
Robert A. Scott, President, Ramapo College of New Jersey
Ruth G. Shaw, President, Central Piedmont Community College
Hoke Smith, President, Towson State University
Kala Stroup, President, Murray State University
Sr. Elizabeth Sueltenfuss, President, Our Lady of the Lake University of San Antonio
William Sullivan, President, Seattle University
P. Michael Timpane, President, Teachers College, Columbia University
Barbara S. Uehling, Chancellor, University of California-Santa Barbara
Robert Woodbury, Chancellor, University of Maine System Office

cated, in an effort to move more of these students into four-year institutions, and especially into teaching programs.

- to reach out to minority youth in their early high school years, with special incentives and support, in order to increase their chances of attending college and to expose them to the attractions of teaching.
- to recognize that the critical shortage in minority teachers is rooted in failures at the elementary levels of education, and earlier. There is no way to "recruit" our way to a solution. We must address the needs of the whole system, especially the urban schools.

Toward Professionalism in Teaching

To summarize, perhaps the strongest message to emerge from our deliberations is that to improve teacher preparation we must do more than just look into our teacher education programs. The issue before us is not "teacher education" but "the education of teachers"—a task in which *all our faculties* are deeply involved.

There is—or should be—continuity in the teaching profession. Elementary, secondary, college and university teachers, faculties in schools of education, the arts and sciences, and other units are all in the same enterprise. Yet their deep community of interest has yet to be exploited to the advantage of all.

We presidents and chancellors have a special role to play in making teaching a more professional activity. Teaching is far more than telling what one knows. It is a complex, demanding, and difficult task. It is becoming more difficult as our students become ever more diverse. As a field of research, teaching deserves our best minds. As a field of practice, teaching deserves much more attention to how we learn from experience, and how we as teachers can assess the consequences of our teaching on our students.

To these ends, we are prepared to undertake serious commitments, beyond what we are doing now, that will contribute to the improvement of primary and secondary education. Some of our commitments are noted here; others will unfold in the future. We recognize that we and our institutions are part of the problem as well as the solution, and that improvement properly begins at home. We also bring to the task a shared confidence that we have much to contribute, and that many of you will wish to join in the effort.

What steps might you take? First, indicate your willingness to undertake the commitments outlined above by endorsing this statement. Second, designate an action officer in your institution as a source for future contact. Third, let us know what initiatives you think should come next in moving us all "from here to there." We have asked the American Association for Higher Education to coordinate this project, so please address your correspondence to that office. ■

Letter to the Editor

DEAR EDITOR:

I happened to be looking over the September 1987 issue of the *AAHE Bulletin* and was pleased to see my old school, Berry College, pictured on the front cover. Then I opened the cover and found the photograph attributed to the University of Michigan! Has some printer's devil made an honest mistake, or has my alma mater been uprooted—lock, stock, gothic dining hall, and reflecting pond—and taken north?

I would hate to revive old regional animosities, but if someone has pulled up the very magnolias of Georgia's venerable mountain college as if they were London Bridge and shipped them to the Great Lakes, that may be more than a southern patriot can bear. Please let me know whether my beloved old school is still where it is supposed to be or whether I'm going to have to head north with pick and shovel to reclaim an important piece of my education. (The building depicted was actually given to Berry College by Henry Ford, so I suppose it's possible that some Detroit people may have taken it for spite.) If I have to drag the whole campus back down here, please advise before that abominable Michigan winter makes the ground too hard.

Sincerely,
Reggie Foster

—Rest assured . . . Berry College and its lovely Ford Building are still safely and solidly rooted in Mount Berry, Georgia. So put away your pick and shovel and accept my apologies. 'Twas an honest, and indeed unfortunate, mistake. —JTH

DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY!

Space is filling quickly for the four remaining Faculty Evaluation Workshops (conducted by Peter Seldin) announced in the September *Bulletin*.

Washington, December 1
The Washington Hilton

Boston, December 3
Logan Airport Hilton

Chicago, January 11, 1988
The Palmer House

San Francisco, January 13, 1988
The San Francisco Hilton

Write or call today for registration information.

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